

## TIPS FOR OFFICE STAFF -- AS DEVELOPED BY YOU

The following tips were developed by Longwood Office Staff to help them better serve the needs of Pediatric Alliance for Coordinated Care

### On the phone...

- ✓ Become familiar with the names of the PACC patients by keeping a list posted near your work area. When booking an appointment, note on the schedule that this is a PACC patient.
- ✓ PACC patients may have urgent medical needs but may not identify themselves on the phone as a PACC family. By recognizing them yourselves by name, you will be able to help them get what they need as quickly as possible.
- ◆ Also, your acknowledgment of a PACC family on the phone or in person with a friendly “Hi, Mrs. Ainsworth,” will be very much appreciated by these families, many of whom are in touch with the practice much more frequently than the average family.
- ◆ By recognizing a family’s name, you can avoid situations like putting them “on hold” when there could likely be an urgent need or asking a question that may not apply (e.g., “Is this a sick visit or a well visit?”).

### Upon arrival...

- ✓ Be aware that the PACC family is coming in. Be prepared to acknowledge them when they sign in. A low-key but welcoming acknowledgment is very meaningful to families.
- ✓ When a PACC patient is coming in and will do best in a particular examining room (e.g. because of size of equipment with the child), remind the nurses so they can save that room.
- ✓ When the family signs in, write PACC by their name.
- ✓ For some families, the waiting room experience is particularly difficult:
  - ◆ Their child may have immune problems and should not be exposed to other sick children.
  - ◆ The amount of equipment they bring with them is large and awkward, and they don’t know where to head.
  - ◆ There is nowhere to sit in the waiting room.
  - ◆ They are uncomfortable with the stares and looks they may get in the waiting room from others unfamiliar with their child’s medical situation.

### In the examining room...

- ✓ Before getting started with any clinical procedures with the child, (e.g. weighing) ask the parent, “Before we get started, is there anything I should know about your child or what works best for him/her when he’s here at the office?”
  - ◆ Another way to inquire about a procedure is, “How do we usually weigh Julie?” (Note: The parent may even want to speak with you out of earshot of her child.)
  - ◆ Given the age/awareness of the child, it may be inappropriate for them to hear any discussions about current concerns.
- ✓ If you have any questions or concerns about what you are observing/learning from an exam, think carefully about whether to share this concern or to comment openly with the parent present. Again, these kinds of comments can be very painful for a parent.
- ✓ Some PACC families may be visiting the office because of some urgent need. You may want to consider delaying some of the routine aspects of the examination until after the parents’ anxiety has been attended to by the physician.
- ✓ In cases where a child is examined frequently and/or repeatedly, you may want to consider letting the physician decide whether it is necessary to undress the child or proceed with routine steps, such as weighing. This can spare the parent what in itself can be a challenging situation.
- ✓ Before assuming that a parent wants to receive a sheet of developmental milestones, give the parent the option of getting this information. For some parents, this sheet only serves as a painful reminder that their child is not developing typically.

### There are a number of ways in which you might help the family:

- ✓ If they are “struggling” with equipment or just maneuvering into the office, offer them assistance by asking, “How can I help you?” (Some families may prefer not to be helped, so by asking directly you are letting them decide what help they want.)
- ✓ Help find them a spot in the waiting room.
- ✓ Offer to have them go into a room immediately.
- ✓ If a doctor is running behind schedule, give the family the option of leaving (e.g. for a cup of coffee) and returning at a certain time. Many PACC families carry cell phones and you might ask if they are reachable that way.

Silva TJ, Sofis LA, Palfrey JS, 2000. *Practicing Comprehensive Care: A Physician’s Operations Manual for Implementing a Medical Home for Children with Special Needs*. Boston, MA: Institute for Community Inclusion, Boston.